DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 945 PS 029 707

TITLE	Early Childhood Support Structure Is Proposed. NCEDL Spotlights, No. 25.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Early Development & Learning, Chapel Hill, NC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2000-08-00
NOTE	3p.; Excerpts from "The Missing Support Infrastructure in Early Childhood," by Jim Gallagher and Dick Clifford, in the Internet journal "Early Childhood Research & Practice" v2 n1.
CONTRACT	R307A60004
AVAILABLE FROM	Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, CB#8185, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185. Tel: 919-966-0867; Web site: http://www.ncedl.org.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Change Strategies; *Educational Quality; Preschool Children; *Preschool Education; Program Improvement; *Public Policy
IDENTIFIERS	Program Characteristics

ABSTRACT

Noting that young children under age five are still without comprehensive public policies to protect or enhance their status, this issue of the NCEDL Spotlights excerpts an article proposing a quality support system for early childhood education programs. The components of a quality support system are highlighted: (1) personnel preparation; (2) technical assistance; (3) applied research and program evaluation; (4) communication; (5) demonstration; (6) data systems; (7) comprehensive planning; and (8) coordination of support elements. Proposed strategies for building early childhood infrastructures are also delineated: (1) identify and cultivate power sources; (2) establish planning structures; (3) mount a media initiative; (4) involve professional organizations; (5) be realistic about time; (6) financing the infrastructure; (7) earmarking; and (8) subsidies. (KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 455 945

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

NCEDL Spotlights

No. 25 August 2000

Early childhood support structure is proposed

Following are excerpts from "The Missing Support Infrastructure in Early Childhood" in the Internet journal Early Childhood Research & Practice at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v2n1/gallagher.html>. The authors are NCEDL researchers Jim Gallagher and Dick Clifford.

Where we are

As we move into the 21st century, young children under the age of 5 are still without comprehensive public policies to protect or enhance their status.

It has been increasingly recognized that merely having a child care specialist and aide who cares for 20 preschool children is not enough to ensure the necessary development of the child in the important preschool age range. Failure to provide a comprehensive system designed to enhance the child's development in those key years can cast long, dark, shadows into the future for many children and create many avoidable problems for the schools.

There clearly needs to be some public and societal answer to the question, "Who cares for young children?"

Components of a quality support system

1. Personnel preparation: If we are to have competent staff, a wide array of personnel preparation programs (preservice and in-service) are necessary, with considerable stress placed on up-grading the capabilities of persons now on the job through short-term training. Agreement is needed on a career ladder that would allow a person working in early childhood to continuously improve herself or himself through personnel preparation.

2. Technical assistance: Establishing various technical assistance programs, perhaps regional centers in a state, would allow local providers to have access to a wide variety of consultation and support personnel that seems necessary for high-quality programs.

3. Applied research and program evaluation: Issues of program evaluation in early childhood are complicated by the lack of general agreement as to the goal or goals from one program or community to another. Are the program goals the enhancement of cognitive development, the mastery of social skills, the attainment of effective attention and self-control, or other compelling goals?

4. Communication: Coordinated efforts at devising a communication network and an ongoing network on a statewide level would provide important support for the child care provider.

5. Demonstration: One strategy that is often used to improve program quality is to identify outstanding programs, establish them as demonstration centers, and urge other professionals to observe and emulate what is happening in those centers or programs that could be transferred to their own program.

Your comments are invited

"The Missing Support Infrastructure in Early Childhood," on which this *Spotlight* is based, is published in Vol. 2, No. 1 of the Internet journal *Early Childhood Research & Practice (ECRP)* at **<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v2n1/gallagher.html>.**

The article also details the various types of barriers that the implementation of new policies must overcome: institutional, psychological, sociological, economic, political and geographic.

The journal has opened a forum at the article's web location. *ECRP* Editors Lilian Katz and Dianne Rothenberg have provided a dialog box that makes it easy to comment on the article, to suggest additional considerations, to contest or agree with the authors' assertions, or to focus on moving this discussion forward in the policy arena. Substantive contributions will be posted on the site for continued discussion.

PS 029707

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6. Data Systems: Since knowledge of the number of children in need of various services is critical to determining the cost of a program or services, it is key to comprehensive planning. A data system can also be useful to answer any number of questions, such as "Are minority children with special needs being served in the same proportion as their demographic proportion in the state?"

7. Comprehensive planning: One of the key aspects of an infrastructure is the ability to do comprehensive statewide planning and to be able to allocate resources over time and in a systematic manner to more easily reach the goals of the program. Such planning should bring together all of the various players and stakeholders in the early childhood domain. Part of the plan would be devoted to determining the degree to which various other elements of the infrastructure (e.g., personnel preparation) should be receiving support.

8. Coordination of support elements: It is not enough to have all of these components present in a particular state; they must be linked together for maximum payoff. Yet, there are enormous barriers to be overcome because of the "parallel play" that the key agencies are engaging in, often not knowing what other agencies are doing, but each convinced of their own legitimate role in early childhood.

Strategies for building ECH infrastructures

Identify and Cultivate Power Sources: We need to ident-ify and cultivate various powerful political sources in the states that could be supporters of the infrastructure concept. Such a power source could be a governor, or a key state legislator, but it could also include professional organizations and business leaders who are convinced of the importance of high-quality early care and education.

Establish Planning Structures: While many states have found it useful to organize interagency or multidisciplinary planning groups, few of these groups have been given a mandate that would allow them to pursue the support system infrastructure concept.

Mount a Media Initiative: The general public has a poorly developed understanding of the infrastructure concept, and there needs to be a long-range media campaign by a variety of committed individuals and organizations. The media effort should also focus on decision-makers who would be responsible for creating and implementing the system.

Involve Professional Organizations: A potentially powerful but little used resource are the state professional organizations, some of whom may be adjuncts to national organizations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Council for Exceptional Children, National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers.

Be Realistic about Time: Think in five-year blocks during which a series of activities would take place to build the necessary groundwork.

Financing the Infrastructure: The establishment of these support system components is much more economical than the across-the-board increases in service delivery strategies (e.g., raising teacher salaries) or extending services and should be attractive to policy makers.

Earmarking: One strategy used by other programs to insure that certain things happen is to earmark certain funds to make sure that a particular proportion of resources will go to that interest. When funds become tight, the direct service money is politically protected, while the cuts are often made in the less politically sensitive infrastructure areas such as personnel preparation or research.

Subsidies: These subsidies would represent a major increment in what we are spending on children. Establishing these will require strong and persistent political and professional leadership.

Wishing Will Not Make It So: One advantage of a comprehensive support system is that many stakeholders can see how such a support system will benefit their programs, if such a system is established in the right fashion.

For more information

Clifford, R. (1997). The future of NAEYC. Speech presented at the annual conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Anaheim, CA.

Henderson, Laura; Basile, Kathleen C.; & Henry, Gary T. (1999). Prekindergarten longitudinal study: 1997-1998 School year annual report. Atlanta: Applied Research Center, Georgia State University.

Kagan, Sharon L., & Cohen, Nancy C. (1997). Not by chance (The Quality 2000 Initiative). New Haven, CT: Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy. ED 417027.

Kirk, Samuel A.; Gallagher, James J.; & Anastasiow, Nicholas. (2000). Educating exceptional children (9th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

NCEDL is administratively housed at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In addition to UNC-CH, partners in NCEDL are the University of Virginia and the University of California at Los Angeles. This project is supported under the Education Research and Development Centers Program, PR/award number R307A60004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education <ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/>, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, the U.S. Department of Education, or any other sponsoring organization. Permission is granted to reprint this *Spotlight*; we ask that you acknowledge the authors of the brochure and NCEDL.

For more information, contact Ivol Pitts at 919-966-9186, or email Ivol_Pitts@unc.edu

Visit our web site at www.ncedl.org

BEST COPY AVAILABLE